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Ferguson, of Troy

A Farce Comedy in Three Acts

By BERNARD FRANCIS MOORE

Author of "The Rough Rider," "Brother Against Brother," "The Wrecker's Daughter," "The Man from Texas," etc.

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CHARACTERS

WALTER HAWLEY, *an elder in the Reformed Church.*

TOM FERGUSON, M.D., *and a red-hot sport from Troy, N. Y.*

CHARLEY MARSHALL, *a young man in love with Suzette.*

LIONELL FAIRFIELD, *a crank that lives next door.*

MIKE MURPHY, *one of the finest in hard luck.*

ELLEN HAWLEY, *the elder's wife and Tom's sister.*

BELINDA FERGUSON, *Tom's wife and Walter's sister.*

SUZETTE HAWLEY, *the elder's niece.*

JOHANNA MULROONEY, *the queen of the kitchen.*

ACT I.—Morning, "Trouble."

ACT II.—Noon, "More trouble."

ACT III.—Evening, "Sunshine."

TIME.—The Present.

PLACE.—Drawing-room in the home of Walter Hawley.

COSTUMES MODERN.

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Ferguson, of Troy

ACT I

SCENE.—*A plain interior ; doors R. and L. ; large double door C. ; down L. fireplace but no fire ; opposite fireplace sofa ; down R. table and two chairs ; statue on pedestal on each side of door C. ; carpet down ; rugs before entrance of three doors ; velvet curtains for door C. looped back with blue ribbons ; up R. C. is a large screen ; over mantel are a number of pictures and other bric-a-brac ; other furniture around room. Music at rise. JOHANNA is dusting table as the curtain rises ; her sleeves are rolled up and her skirt tucked up around her waist.*

JOHANNA (*singing*).

“All around me hat I will wear a green willow,
All around me hat for a twelvemonth an’ a day ;
An’ ef any wan shall ask me the rason why I wear it,
I will tell thim me throe love is far, far away.”

WALTER *runs in from L.*

WALTER (*his vest is unbuttoned, and his tie and one side of his collar are open*). Johanna, stop that infernal singing ! (*He speaks very crossly as he looks around room.*)

JOH. (*meekly*). Yis, sur. (*Aside.*) I wonder what ails him now ?

WAL. What time is it ? (*He buttons his collar and fixes his tie.*)

JOH. A little afther sivin, sur.

WAL. Seven o’clock ? Great heavens ! Any of the family up yet ? (*Begins to button his vest.*)

JOH. (*aside*). I won’t tell him the missus didn’t come home

herself till afther six o'clock. (*Aloud.*) Thim's all aslape as yet, sur.

WAL. (*aside*). Thank heaven for that! (*Aloud.*) That will do! You may leave the room now.

JOH. But the dustin', sur.

WAL. Oh, damn the dusting. You may finish the dusting some other time. And Johanna.

JOH. Yis, sur.

WAL. (*looks around and then speaks in a cautious whisper*). Above all things don't tell any one the time I came home this morning! Do you hear me, Johanna? Tell no one!

JOH. Not aven yer wife, sur!

WAL. (*angrily*). No, you infernal idiot! I don't want my wife to hear of it all! And if I hear you telling it to any one, after what I have just said, you can prepare to hunt another place. Now leave the room.

JOH. Yis, sur.

[*Exit c.*

WAL. (*sitting down on sofa with a sigh of relief*). At last I am alone. Once more beneath the shelter of my own roof! Now to collect my thoughts. What if my wife should hear of last night's escapade. I should be ruined! Such a loving, trusting nature as she has too! It's a burning shame, that's what it is. A woman without a secret. A life like an open book. She doesn't even know I have a sister living in Troy, New York. A woman with a soul as pure as an angel's. While I am nothing but a scoundrel. The idea of Walter Hawley, elder of the Reformed Church, a spectator of a chicken fight in a dirty barn at midnight! It's awful! And to think the place should be raided by the police. Horrible! And to think that since the hour of one, I have been hiding from the police. Every time I saw the flash of a star, I would dodge into some alley, and after running all over town, I finally managed to reach my own home at seven o'clock in the morning. And all this time my poor loving wife was sleeping on, unconscious of the fool I was making of myself. And that man that was sitting next to me. The fellow that called himself Ferguson. That fellow was certainly a warm member. But there, the Lord forgive me! I am talking slang again!

SUZETTE *enters from R.*

SUZETTE (*in surprise*). Why, uncle, are you up already?

WAL. (*jumping up at sound of her voice, looks around and*

then sits down again). Oh, yes, hours ago ! (*Quickly.*) No, no, child. I mean one hour ago.

SUZ. (*aside*). How strange he talks. (*Aloud.*) Why, uncle, I don't believe you have closed your eyes during the night ! (*Stands at back of sofa looking at him.*) I am afraid you are not well, uncle. Shall I send for Dr. Ferguson ?

WAL. (*aside*). Ferguson again ! (*Aloud.*) Ferguson, Ferguson ? And who in the name of heaven is Dr. Ferguson ?

SUZ. Why, uncle, he is a physician, and just opened up his office for business yesterday. I saw the sign in the window and over the door. Shall I send for him, uncle ? I am sure you are badly in need of his help.

WAL. (*getting up and speaking sternly*). Suzette, how dare you say I am sick ? I am well ! Never felt better in all my life ! Had a fine night's rest. Never slept better since I was an infant in my mother's arms ! (*Aside.*) I'll bet the police will be here for me inside of an hour !

SUZ. Uncle, do you know where Hogan's barn is ?

WAL. (*startled*). What, Suzette ? (*Angrily.*) How dare you accuse me of being there ! How dare you, I say ?

SUZ. (*in surprise*). Why, uncle, I never said you were there ! I merely asked you if you knew where the place was.

WAL. What put such an idea in your head ? What should I know of Hogan's barn ? Girl, what do you know about this place ? Confess all ! You must have heard some one mention the place, or you would not ask me such a question.

SUZ. Why, uncle, I never heard of the place until a short time ago.

WAL. And then some one told you, of course. (*Aside.*) Oh, Lord, I can see my disgrace being published all over the city.

SUZ. (*shaking her head quickly*). You are quite wrong, uncle. The way I came to hear about the place is from this morning's paper !

WAL. The paper, Suzette ? (*Aside.*) What if they should have my name in the paper ? (*Aloud.*) What had the paper to say about the place, Suzette ?

SUZ. The paper mentions about a chicken fight being held in the barn last night, and during the contest, the place was raided by the police. Then follows, I believe, the names of those present in the barn at the time of the raid !

WAL. (*in a whisper as he looks around room*). Names, Suzette ? (*Aside.*) It's all up with me now ! I can see my-

self locked in a cell peeking through the bars. (*Aloud.*) Girl, did you know any of the names?

SUZ. (*shaking her head*). I didn't read any of them, uncle.

WAL. Where is the paper?

SUZ. I left it in the kitchen with Johanna. (*He walks toward door c.*) Where are you going, uncle, in such a great hurry?

WAL. To find the paper and read the names of those present at the disgraceful scene. As an elder of the Reformed Church, it is my duty to put a stop to such evils. (*Aside.*) I can feel myself in trouble already. (*Aloud.*) You remain here, Suzette, and attend to your aunt when she gets up. Now to get the paper, and then for my crusade against this brutal sport. [*Exit c. quickly.*]

SUZ. Mercy on me, what does it all mean? Is my uncle going crazy? I never remember him to have acted like that before, in all my life. Something is wrong somewhere. And then why should he have been so excited when I spoke about Hogan's barn? Well, I am afraid I will have to give it up. I am afraid there is some mystery here that needs solving very badly.

CHARLEY *enters from c.*

CHARLEY. Good-morning, Suzette, my darling!

SUZ. (*at sound of his voice she looks around in surprise*). Oh, Charley, how dare you come here, when you know uncle forbade you entering the door of this house again?

CHAR. (*laughing*). I know he did, Suzette! (*Both sit on sofa.*) But then you see I didn't enter this house through any door this time.

SUZ. Why, Charley, what do you mean?

CHAR. I mean that, burglar like, I entered through one of the basement windows. I knew there was no use in going to the front door and ringing the bell, as Johanna had received instructions from your uncle not to let me in.

SUZ. I am afraid if uncle found you here now, Charley, he would hand you over to the police.

CHAR. Oh, I don't know about that! Suzette, was your uncle in the house all of last night?

SUZ. Why, of course he was. Where should he be?

CHAR. But are you quite sure he was?

SUZ. Why, yes, Charley. He told me so himself, less than

ten minutes ago. But what does it all mean? I believe my poor uncle is going crazy.

CHAR. Heavens! No! What are his symptoms?

SUZ. Why, when I came into this room a short time ago, I found my uncle here and he seemed dreadfully excited. I spoke to him and he answered me in a rambling manner. Suddenly I asked him if he knew where Hogan's barn was.

CHAR. (*eagerly*). And how did he act then?

SUZ. He jumped up and behaved in a most extraordinary manner. He wanted to know how I dared accuse him of being there.

CHAR. (*laughing*). And did you, Suzette?

SUZ. Why, no! I merely asked him if he knew where the place was. Finally he calmed down and wanted to know what I knew about Hogan's barn, chicken fights, police raids and so on.

CHAR. And how did he act then?

SUZ. Worse than before!

CHAR. (*aside*). I was right then. It was he I met last night. (*Aloud.*) And where is dear, saintly uncle now, Suzette?

SUZ. Gone to the kitchen in search of the paper. (*Anxiously.*) But tell me, Charley, dear, what does it all mean?

CHAR. It means that when I come back, I am going to be admitted through the front door. And, furthermore, I am going to ask your hand from your uncle, and he won't dare to refuse me. I have the saintly gentleman just where I want him at last.

SUZ. (*sternly*). Charley Marshall, are you going crazy too?

CHAR. Not at all, Suzette. (*He places arm around her waist and kisses her.*) You will know all in time.

(*Walks toward door c.*)

SUZ. Where are you going now, Charley?

CHAR. I am going to procure a marriage license. And once armed with that important document, I am going to return to this house and tackle dear uncle for his consent. So for the present, Suzette, be a good little girl until I return.

[*Exit c.*

SUZ. (*looking after him*). Well, I hope you will be successful. There is some deep, dark mystery in all this, and my uncle is mixed up in it. I trust it's nothing serious.

ELLEN *enters from R.*

ELLEN (*seeing SUZETTE and speaking quickly as she looks around*). Child, have you seen your uncle this morning yet?

SUZ. Why, yes, auntie, he just left me to go to the kitchen and get the morning paper from Johanna.

ELLEN (*aside*). Merciful heavens! if my husband ever reads the paper I am lost. He must not read it! (*Aloud.*) Suzette, go this very instant and bring the paper to me.

SUZ. But he may not wish to give it up, auntie.

ELLEN (*sternly*). But he must, I say! The happiness of this house depends on my securing possession of the paper. Go, Suzette, go before it is too late! (*Aside.*) It may be too late already. Oh, why didn't I think of the paper myself!

SUZ. Very well, auntie, I will do the best I can to preserve the happiness of this house. [*Exit C.*]

ELLEN (*looking around and speaking wildly*). Oh! why was I tempted to go to that masquerade ball last night? What if the papers should contain a list of the names of those present! It was an unfortunate thing for me that my mask slipped off when it did. I am sure that more than one of those present knew and recognized me. And the idea of deceiving my poor loving husband. Poor Walter, to spend the entire night like a ministering angel of mercy, beside the bed of a sick friend. If he should read the paper I would be disgraced for life! My only hope is to secure possession of the paper and then destroy it. (*Wildly clasping her hands.*) Oh, will Suzette be successful?

SUZETTE *runs in from C.*

SUZ. Uncle has carried the paper up to his study with him, auntie! Johanna has just told me so!

ELLEN (*rising*). Suzette, we must secure that paper at once. (*Taking her by the hand.*) Come, child.

SUZ. Yes, auntie. [*Exeunt L.*]

JOHANNA *enters from C.*

JOH. (*carrying a duster*). Well, sur, the paper do be in great demand this mornin' entirely. I wonder what is all the news about? (*Begins to dust table.*) Shure Ireland must be free, or somethin' like that, to make thim all so anxious to get hould av the paper. Be heavens, I'm gittin' anxious to read

the paper meself. An' that just reminds me. The family nixt dure sint in wurd if the crazy man that thinks himself a poet should stray into the house, to pay no attention to him, but to humor him as if he was perfectly harmless. Faith, I'll humor him with an ax if he gits funny with me, so I will.

LIONELL *enters from C.*

LION. (*his face is very pale and he wears his hair long*). Ah, fair creature, pause for an instant, and listen to the pleadings of my heart.

JOH. (*looking around; aside*). Sufferin' Shamrocks! the lunatic from nixt dure! (*Aloud.*) Good-day, sur.

LION. Ah, yes, sure enough, it's day—morning. And such a beautiful morn! (*Taking her by the hand.*) But come, fair creature, and let us sit on yonder cliff, (*points to sofa*), and enjoy the beauties of the morn!

JOH. (*aside*). Where the divil is the cliff? (*Aloud.*) With all me heart an' soul, sur.

LION. Come, then, fair creature. (*Both sit on sofa.*) Are not these cliffs reminiscent of dear old England?

JOH. They are that same. (*Aside.*) Divil the wan av me knows what the man is talkin' about, at all!

LION. (*placing hand to ear and listening*). Listen—listen, fair creature, I say, hear you not the song of the little birds in the tree yonder, as they flit from bough to bough?

JOH. (*aside*). Shure he sees birds now. I wonder what will it be nixt? (*Aloud.*) Shure I think they must be canary birds from the feathers they wear.

LION. Yes, fair creature, they are canary birds. But see the beautiful river at our feet. (*Points to ground.*) See the white wings of the vessels, as they glide gently down the stream. Is the scene not a magnificent one?

JOH. It certainly do be a very beautiful picture! (*Aside.*) I must humor this gintleman, or there might be throuble in shtore for me. Oh, if Moike were only here!

LION. But, fair creature, shall I sing to thee?

JOH. (*quickly*). Oh, yes, sing be all means! (*Aloud.*) Some wan may hear him an' come to me riscue.

LION. (*thoughtfully*). But stay. I will not sing now.

JOH. (*aside*). If I could only place me hand convaniently on an ax! (*Aloud.*) What shall we do thin! (*Aside.*) I'm gittin' as bad as he is!

LION. (*quickly*). Ah, an idea has just struck me!

JOH. (*aside*). I wish to heaven it was a fist ! (*Aloud.*) So ye were tellin' me, sur.

LION. Silence, and I shall unfold to thee a scheme ! On the banks of yon stream in the heart of the mountain is my castle. I shall fly away with thee, peerless creature, and together we shall enjoy the moonlight from the balcony of my castle !

JOH. (*aside*). Now it's moonlight an' castles ? Somethin' is goin' to happen in a minute. (*Aloud.*) An' where is yer boat, sur ?

LION. Boat, fair creature ? I scorn the use of a boat ! I shall carry thee away with me in my airship ! (*Jumping up.*) So, fair creature, meet me in one hour from now at the window of the turret chamber of this mansion, and together we shall fly through space to my castle in the heart of the mountains. So farewell, fair creature, for the present. I go now to prepare my airship for the journey. [*Exit c. slowly and majestically.*]

JOH. (*slowly rising and looking after him*). Well, be the time ye git back wid the airship, I'll be in the kitchen wid me hand on a flatiron waitin' fer ye, me darlin'. But thin shure he's not the only crazy man in the wurd I'm thinkin'. There's wan or two in this house as shure as me name's Johanna.

(*Begins to dust chairs again.*)

WALTER *enters from c.*

WAL. (*he carries a paper in his hand*). So you are here again, are you ?

JOH. (*nodding*). Yis, sur. Is there anythin' I can do fer ye, sur ?

WAL. (*crossly*). Yes, leave the room !

JOH. (*twirling the duster over her shoulder*). Very well, sur. [*She exits c. slowly.*]

WAL. (*looking cautiously around before he sits down on sofa*). At last I have the paper in my possession ! Now to read about last night's escapade while I have the chance ! (*Looks over paper.*) Ah, here we have it ! (*Reads aloud.*) "Last night, about twelve o'clock, or a little later, a quiet tip was given to the police about a chicken fight about to take place in a notorious resort named Hogan's barn, and situated in one of the worst parts of the town. When the police arrived the place was well filled, and a fight between two game cocks in progress. The sudden arrival of the police caused a stampede

among those present! A free for all fight then took place! One man who looked and dressed like a minister of the church went flying through a small window in one side of the building. In trying to make a prisoner of him policeman Murphy received the heel of one of his shoes in the face, and he now has a most beautiful black eye. All managed to escape, and thus the names of those present could not be learned." (*Letting the paper fall and uttering a sigh of relief.*) Thank heaven for that! I am safe for the present! I wonder who policeman Murphy is? I am sorry for the kick in the eye, but then I had to make my escape or face an awful scandal! A black eye will wear away in time, but the talk of a scandal never!

CHARLEY *enters from C.*

CHAR. Good-morning, Mr. Hawley!

WAL. (*jumping up and looking around; then speaking angrily*). How dare you come to this house? How dare you, I say? What do you want? Didn't I close my door against you?

CHAR. (*nodding*). I know you did; but I am here just the same.

WAL. (*angrily*). You—you—young scoundrel!

CHAR. Oh, keep cool! There is no use of getting excited! I am not going to run away. I'm here to talk business. (*He sits on edge of table.*)

WAL. (*angrily*). Leave the place before I send for the police and have you locked up!

CHAR. (*quietly*). Speaking of police, do you know an officer by the name of Murphy, who has a most beautiful black eye?

WAL. (*falling back on the sofa; then aside*). I wonder what does he mean by that? (*Aloud.*) What do you mean, you young reprobate?

CHAR. (*coolly*). Just what I say. Did you ever hear of a place called Hogan's barn?

WAL. (*aside*). I must be careful. (*Aloud.*) Did you ever hear of the place, young man?

CHAR. (*nodding*). Yes, I was there at a chicken fight last night!

WAL. (*aside*). I wonder if he saw me there? (*Aloud.*) And what brings you here this morning?

CHAR. I came here to ask you to allow me to marry Suzette.

I have the license in my pocket, and as you are an elder of the Reformed Church you can perform the ceremony.

WAL. (*aside*). Now to see how far a bluff will go with this young man. (*Aloud.*) How dare you ask the hand of my niece in marriage? (*Jumping up and shaking his fist at him.*) How dare you, I say? (*Angrily.*) You—you—spectator of a chicken fight at midnight! No, sir! You are not good enough for my niece! Do you think I would allow Suzette to marry a spectator of a chicken fight? Decidedly not, sir! (*Aside.*) He don't seem to be weakening any.

CHAR. Well, don't you think she would be just as safe with me as she is with an uncle who is a spectator of a chicken fight, and likewise an elder in the Reformed Church?

WAL. (*angrily*). Do you mean to accuse me of being present at that disgraceful scene?

CHAR. (*nodding*). I most certainly do.

WAL. (*sternly*). Young man, I'll make you prove what you say!

CHAR. (*getting off table*). Very well, sir, I will any time you want me.

WAL. (*aside*). The bluff won't work! I'll have to conciliate him. (*Aloud.*) Young man, why are you so sure I was there?

CHAR. (*laughing*). Because when you went flying through the window, and while the officer was feeling his eyes, I was the next one to follow you.

WAL. (*aside*). The game is up! (*Aloud.*) And what if I refuse to give my consent to the match?

CHAR. Then, by jingo! I'll tell your wife all about last night's racket!

WAL. (*quickly*). Heavens! anything but that! You can marry the girl, my boy, on one condition.

CHAR. Well, Mr. Hawley.

WAL. Charley, my boy, I know you are a splendid liar! And in case of any trouble I want you to help me out!

CHAR. I will do the best I can, sir.

WAL. (*shaking him by the hand*). That will be sufficient, young man. And now I will call Suzette and tell her the joyful news. (*Calls.*) Suzette, oh, Suzette!

SUZETTE *enters from L.*

SUZ. Did you call me, uncle? (*Aside.*) I wonder has Charley been as successful as he thought he would be.

WAL. This young man and myself have come to a peaceful understanding concerning you. He has asked your hand in marriage.

SUZ. Oh, uncle!

WAL. And before I give my consent, I want to find out if you are willing to take him for better or worse?

SUZ. (*holding down her head*). Oh, uncle, you know I am!

WAL. (*giving her right hand to CHARLEY*). Then take her, my boy, and be happy! You can get married just as soon as you please.

CHAR. Mr. Hawley, you are a gentleman.

SUZ. (*throwing her arms around WALTER'S neck and kissing him*). Oh, uncle, you are an old darling!

WAL. (*to CHARLEY*). Young man, don't forget your promise.

CHAR. I shan't, I assure you. Come, Suzette.

[*Both exit L.*]

WAL. (*picking up the paper from the floor and holding it in his hand*). I wonder how many in that infernal place knew me last night. If this keeps up much longer I'll be wearing stripes before sunset. I certainly must have made a most distinguished ass of myself last night and no mistake. But I trust, with the help of Charley, to lie my way out of the scrape as best I can. (*Sits on sofa.*)

JOHANNA *enters from C.*

JOH. A gentleman to see ye, sur.

WAL. (*looking around in surprise*). A gentleman to see me?

JOH. (*nodding*). Yis, sur.

WAL. Who is he?

JOH. Shure, an' I dunno, sur.

WAL. Didn't he give his name?

JOH. (*shaking her head*). No, sur.

WAL. Then tell him to come here. You need not bring him here yourself. Do you understand me, Johanna?

JOH. Yis, sur, I do!

[*Exit C.*]

WAL. (*jumping up and walking up and down room excitedly*). I'll bet the man at the door is the sheriff, and he was afraid to tell his name to Johanna, for fear of not being able to arrest me. (*Throwing paper on table*). Well, if I am to be made a prisoner of, no servant will have the happiness of

gloating over my misery. In fact, I am prepared for anything that may happen from this time out. I am growing desperate!

TOM enters from C.

TOM (*laughing*). Well, old sport, so we meet again, do we?

WAL. How dare you come heré, sir? How dare you, I say? What do you want? What is the object of your visit?

TOM (*aside*). He hasn't found out I am his brother-in-law yet. (*Aloud*.) Go easy, old sport! (*Throws himself on sofa*.) One question at a time, if you please, and no more.

WAL. (*sinking in chair at table; aside*). I wonder, are the police after him too? (*Aloud, as he looks around cautiously*.) Well, then, what brings you here?

TOM (*aside*). I'll have some fun with him. (*Aloud, as he looks around, and then in a whisper*.) I came to warn you of danger before it's too late. To put you on your guard.

WAL. (*in a trembling voice*). What do you mean, sir? I have committed no crime! Why should you wish to warn me?

TOM (*rising and crossing to table*). Do you forget last night and the chicken fight in Hogan's barn?

WAL. (*looking around, and then in a whisper*). Not so loud! Some one might hear you, and in that case I should be a ruined man!

TOM. And why ruined?

WAL. In the first place, I don't want my wife to hear about it at all. And in the second place, I am an elder in the Reformed Church, and once the people of my flock hear about my escapade I would be driven from the fold in disgrace. It was an evil minute for me when I listened to the voice of the tempter, and went to that den of iniquity!

TOM (*enthusiastically*). Hogan's barn may be a den of iniquity, but just the same, you would have seen a glorious fight, if the police hadn't arrived when they did.

WAL. (*quickly*). And that red rooster certainly was a hummer when he came to use his spurs on the other fellow's neck!

TOM (*slapping him on the back*). Say now, old fellow, you are talking like a red-hot sport from Memphis. It certainly was most unfortunate the police arrived when they did.

WAL. (*slowly*). Yes, most unfortunate for me, I must say.

TOM. How is that?

WAL. You forget that some policeman by the name of

Murphy received the heel of one of my shoes in the eye, when I went flying through that infernal window!

TOM (*aside*). The funniest thing I ever saw in all my life. (*Aloud.*) And that is just why I am here now. Ever since the raid on the barn last night, I have been trying to escape from the police. I was sure I had them thrown off the track and started for home. Just as I reached the corner of the next street, I came face to face with a policeman who had a most beautiful black eye!

WAL. I'll bet it was Murphy!

TOM (*aside*). I'm getting to be an awful liar. (*Aloud.*) I guess it was Murphy, all right! But how did you come to know his name was Murphy?

WAL. Read it in the paper this morning. Are you sure he knew you as one of the spectators of the fight last night?

TOM. Well, from the way he started in pursuit of me, he must have thought he was after the man who gave him the kick in the eye.

WAL. And what did you do?

TOM (*aside*). Now to lay it on thick. (*Aloud.*) What did I do, you ask?

WAL. (*nodding*). Yes.

TOM. I ran! And strange as it may seem to you, he ran after me. Down one alley and up another he went. First over one fence and then another! Finally I struck the front of your house. The Irishwoman had the front door open sweeping the hall. I ran in, slammed and bolted the door, and then told the servant I wanted to see you. And so here I am, safe for the present, I hope.

WAL. (*aside*). I can see my finish now! (*Aloud.*) And do you think the policeman is on guard in front of the house at the present time?

TOM. I am sure of it! He is waiting till I come out to make a prisoner of me.

WAL. Heavens! what shall I do? If I am arrested I will be ruined for life! Is there no way in which I can escape?

TOM (*aside*). I'll smother him in a minute. (*Aloud.*) I have an idea. And it seems to be your only means of escape at the present time.

WAL. Then, for the Lord's sake, tell me at once!

TOM. You must disguise yourself, so that no one will know you. Or until such a time as the trouble has all blown over.

WAL. Disguise myself? I, Walter Hawley, elder of the

Reformed Church, going around in disguise! What do you think my wife and friends would say about me?

TOM. It is a great deal better to go around in disguise, than to sit in a cell in the police station with your nose pressed against the bars!

WAL. Yes, yes, you are quite right!

TOM. I am glad to see you are taking a sensible view of the matter. It's no joke when you go out, to have an officer of the law clap his hand on your shoulder and tell you that you are under arrest for kicking a policeman in the eye.

WAL. What kind of a disguise would you advise me to wear? And then how can I explain the mystery to my wife?

TOM. Leave all that to me. I'll go down to the kitchen now and give the servant a note to a friend of mine who will furnish us all the disguises we need. I won't be gone only a few minutes, as my friend lives in the next street.

WAL. And see if Murphy with the black eye is still in front of the house.

TOM. Trust me for that.

[*Exit c.*

WAL. (*looking after him, and then to audience*). Only to think that I am compelled to remain hidden in my own house, and forced to adopt a disguise to save myself from being arrested and placed in prison as the result of last night's escapade. It's awful, that's what it is, simply awful! If this rumpus ever gets into the paper, it will be all up with me. How in the name of heaven can I explain this sudden transformation to my wife, when she sees me in disguise. She is liable to take me for a burglar and send for the police. Police? How I hate the infernal name! All I can do is to trust in Ferguson to get me out of the scrape!

ELLEN *enters from L.*

ELLEN (*crossing to him*). Ah, Walter, my love, I have been looking for you. (*She stoops down and kisses him.*) Have you the paper, love?

WAL. (*aside*). I am a scoundrel to betray the love of such a woman. (*Aloud, as he picks up the paper from the table and hands it to her.*) Yes, my love, I have been reading about the great masquerade ball last night.

ELLEN (*aside*). Merciful heavens, I am lost! (*She takes the paper, crosses to sofa and sits down; aloud.*) Oh, yes indeed, it must have been a great sight. But I am certain it cannot be compared to the excitement that must have ensued

when the police raided Hogan's barn at midnight! (*Looks over the paper.*)

WAL. (*jumping up*). Woman, what do you know about Hogan's barn? (*Crosses to her.*)

ELLEN (*looking up in surprise*). Why, nothing, my love, only what Suzette has been telling me.

WAL. (*aside*). I am rapidly making a fool of myself. (*Aloud.*) Then you know nothing about the place, except what this girl has been telling you?

ELLEN. Nothing at all, love. But you appear to be fatigued! Did you sit up all night with your sick friend?

WAL. (*sitting down in surprise*). Sick friend, my dear? What do you mean?

ELLEN. Why, Walter, love, you left the house last night with the intention of sitting up with a brother member of your lodge who was dangerously ill.

WAL. (*aside*). I had forgotten all about that gag. (*Aloud.*) Oh, yes, my love, I spent a most trying night indeed. But then the poor fellow is much better now.

ELLEN. I am so glad to hear you say that!

WAL. Oh, yes, he is better off where he is. He died just before I came home this morning.

ELLEN. Oh, Walter, how sad! What was the matter with him?

WAL. Oh, my love, he had a most horrible disease.

ELLEN (*in a fright, moving away from him*). Oh, Walter, how dreadful.

WAL. In fact, the disease is such that the board of health are going to hold an inquest over him to determine what kind of a microbe he had in him when he died. In case the police should call here for me, don't be alarmed, my love, as I will be needed as one of the chief witnesses at the inquest.

ELLEN. But, Walter, my love, if the man died of a contagious fever, you should have burnt your clothes in order to prevent the disease from spreading. I will send for a doctor and have the house fumigated at once.

WAL. (*quickly*). Not at all necessary, my dear! One of the peculiarities of the disease is, that any one wearing a disguise will instantly prevent the disease from spreading! (*Aside.*) That's the best lie I've told yet!

ELLEN (*aside*). There is something wrong somewhere. I'll have to keep my eyes open. (*Aloud.*) And will you have to wear a disguise, my love?

WAL. I certainly will. So now be prepared when you see me roaming around the house in disguise.

ELLEN. I won't be alarmed, my love. And now, Walter, may I take the paper with me?

WAL. Certainly, my love.

ELLEN (*rising*). Oh, thank you, dear! [*Exit L.*]

WAL. (*looking after her and then laughing*). As a liar I am getting to be a wonder! That disguise business for preventing the spread of the disease was a brilliant stroke on my part. So that now if I am arrested and in disguise, she won't think anything of it. I do wish Ferguson was back.

TOM runs in from C.

TOM (*he carries a small parcel in his hand*). Here I am at last, old man! (*Handing him the parcel*.) Here is the disguise; put it on at once.

WAL. Shall I assume the disguise here?

TOM. Any old place you like.

WAL. Then I will take them up to the library. There is a mirror there and I can see better to dress myself.

TOM. Suit yourself.

WAL. Are you going to come with me?

TOM. Well, if you have no objection, I'd much prefer to remain in this room.

WAL. Very well, Ferguson. But do you think you will recognize me, when I return?

TOM (*laughing*). I'll take chances on knowing you all right.

WAL. Then I'm off. [*Exit C.*]

TOM (*looking after him, laughing, and seating himself on the sofa*). I can see a bushel of fun in this house before I leave. Still I must try and see my sister Ellen. It will be a big surprise to her when she learns I am living only three doors away. I must try and square matters with her about her husband and his disguise. I don't think the police recognized any of us last night, and yet, strange as it may seem, I did see the very policeman my esteemed brother-in-law kicked in the eye last night, in front of this very house less than an hour ago. It may be only a coincidence, or the man may simply be traveling the beat.

ELLEN enters from L.

ELLEN (*seeing him and then stopping suddenly*). I beg your pardon, sir, I did not know my husband had a visitor.

TOM (*looking around and then jumping up in surprise*). Why, Ellen, don't you know me? Or have you forgotten me already?

ELLEN (*surprised; then crossing to him quickly*). Why, Tom, my dear brother!

TOM (*clasping her in his arms and kissing her fondly*). My darling sister!

WALTER *enters from C., sees them and stops suddenly; he has a red bald wig on his head and a red beard in his hand.*

ELLEN (*kissing TOM*). Oh, you old darling!

WAL. (*looking at them in amazement*). Well, I'm hanged! (*Shaking his fist at them.*) I'll kill Ferguson for this!

(TOM down C. with his arms around ELLEN, and facing the audience; WALTER at door C. watching them and shaking his fist at them which holds the beard, while with his other hand, he tears the wig from his head.)

SLOW CURTAIN.

ACT II

SCENE.—*Same as Act I. Music at rise. WALTER enters from c., and looks around; he is without the disguise.*

WAL. (*down c.*). The room is empty! They are gone! Perhaps eloped! (*Sits at table.*) What am I to do? Let me think! (*Striking his forehead.*) Think—think—I can't think! My brain is in a whirl! The idea of my wife, my Ellen, in the arms of another man! It's awful—simply awful! (*Jumping up.*) And yes, now I come to think of it, they were kissing each other. I see it all now! The warning was only a subterfuge for that scoundrel to gain an entrance to this house. The disguise he told me to assume was only a blind to have the police call here and cart me off to the lunatic asylum. Once out of his way and he would have clear sailing. And the wife of my bosom was a partner in the scheme! (*Walking up and down room excitedly.*) But I'll be revenged, ha! ha! I'll kill the two of them! I'll show the pair of them what a wronged man can do in the way of avenging his honor! I am beginning to feel myself gloating over their misery already!

SUZETTE enters from L.

SUZ. (*looking at him in surprise*). Why, uncle, what's the matter? You seem to be terribly excited! What has happened, uncle?

WAL. Child, the worst thing that could befall a married man has befallen me!

SUZ. Why, uncle, you surprise me!

WAL. Surprised? I am simply thunderstruck. (*Looking around and then in a cautious whisper.*) Suzette, has it ever occurred to you that there was a serpent in our midst?

SUZ. A serpent, uncle? You mean a snake!

WAL. Not a snake that crawls on the ground, and that warns before they strike. But a serpent that strikes in the dark.

SUZ. (*aside*). I wonder is uncle growing crazy? (*Aloud.*) Why, uncle, how strange you talk! What does it all mean?

WAL. It means I am a desperate man, Suzette ! I am a man looking for revenge !

SUZ. Why, uncle, I am afraid you are ill. Hadn't you better let me send for Doctor Ferguson ?

WAL. (*stopping suddenly and looking at her*). Doctor Ferguson ? Did you say Ferguson ? (*Laughing wildly.*) Oh, yes, send for Ferguson ! When I get through with him, Ferguson will be living in another world !

SUZ. (*looking at him in amazement*). Merciful heavens, uncle has a fit ! (*Runs out L.*)

WAL. (*laughing wildly*). Ha ! ha ! Send for Ferguson ! Let him come ! I am ready for him ! I am a desperate man ! (*Thoughtfully.*) Am I a desperate man as I think I am, or only a fool ? Actually I am getting afraid of myself.

ELLEN *enters from L.*

ELLEN. Walter, my love, can I speak to you for a moment ?

WAL. (*angrily*). How dare you speak to me, woman ? Thank heaven my eyes are open at last !

ELLEN. What on earth is the matter with you, Walter ? Are you losing what little sense you ever had ?

WAL. (*aside*). Now she is making fun of me. (*Aloud.*) I tell you it won't work. I know all. But look out for me ! Look out for me ! And, woman, beware of the vengeance of a wronged man !

ELLEN (*aside*). Bless my soul, is the man going mad ? (*Aloud, sternly.*) Walter Hawley, have you been drinking ?

WAL. Drinking, madam ? I'll never drink again until I drink his gore ! I'll show the world the way in which a man should avenge his honor ! Tremble, woman, I say !

ELLEN. Tremble for what ?

WAL. Because I know all ! My eyes have pierced the gloom at last. And I know all, I tell you !

ELLEN. You know all, nothing ! You are simply making a fool of yourself. I'll have to send for Doctor Ferguson, and have him place you in a straight jacket !

WAL. (*wildly*). Ferguson again ! Woman, from this time forth you can expect but little mercy from me. I am a desperate man, and I am going to kill the man that has wrecked my home ! So in future beware of me ! [*Exit C.*]

ELLEN (*looking after him*). Well, what on earth is the matter with my husband ? I don't remember him to have

acted like this since we were married. I wonder is he really going insane? I wonder has anything happened to him of late, that would upset his brain? Ah, yes, I had quite forgotten! The disease! That's what ails him! The disease has attacked him! He is without the disguise, and the disease has spread already and he is the first victim! How cruel of me to think he was intoxicated. Poor fellow! The disease attacked his brain, and he imagines some one is trying to break up his home. I'll speak to my brother and have him attend to his case at once.

TOM *enters from R.*

TOM. It's no use, Ellen. I have been all over the house, and can't find your husband anywhere.

ELLEN. Oh, Tom, he was here, and I am afraid he is losing his mind.

TOM (*in surprise*). Impossible, Ellen!

ELLEN. It's a fact, Tom, I assure you. He just left me, before you came in and he was talking about honor, blood, revenge and I don't know what else.

TOM. And are you able to account for this sudden change?

ELLEN. Oh, Tom, I am afraid the disease has already attacked his brain!

TOM (*in surprise*). Disease? What disease are you talking of, Ellen?

ELLEN. Oh, I don't know the name of it!

TOM. And how did your husband come to catch it?

ELLEN. Some man that belonged to the same lodge as my husband does, was taken sick and Walter sat up with him last night.

TOM. Last night?

ELLEN. Yes, Tom.

TOM. And what course has he taken to prevent the spread of the disease? (*Aside.*) The old rascal!

ELLEN. He was to assume a disguise and thus prevent the disease from spreading.

TOM (*aside*). This old fellow is all right. (*Aloud.*) And has he got the disguise on now?

ELLEN. That's just the worst of it. He is still without the disguise and I am afraid the disease has already attacked him! Oh, Tom, won't you try and do something for him? Remember he is my husband!

TOM. I won't forget in a hurry, I assure you.

ELLEN. And you will help him, Tom?

TOM. With all my heart!

ELLEN. You have relieved my heart of a great weight,

TOM. I will go and try and find him, and send him to you. Perhaps you may be able to overcome the disease before it's too late!

[*Exit C. quickly.*]

TOM. I wonder what kind of a game is my brother-in-law playing on my sister? The idea of him sitting up all night with a sick friend is an old dodge, but it seemed to have worked all right in this case. (*Sits on sofa.*) And then this disguise business. That was what I put him up to, but he seems to have turned it to good account. But the idea of a man wearing a disguise to prevent the spreading of a disease is something new to me. (*Laughs.*) That's the best thing I've heard in twenty years. I think I'll look around the house again and see if I can find my respected brother-in-law. [*Rises and exit L.*]

WALTER *enters from C.*

WAL. (*looking around*). She has left the room! Such brazen effrontery! I never saw the like of it in all my life! (*He walks up and down the room.*) But I will be revenged! (*Laughs; then quickly.*) But how can I wreak my vengeance on this monster? Ah, I have it! (*Stopping suddenly and clapping his hands.*) I'll make him fight a duel! Oh, if I only had a friend on whom I could rely! But, alas! it seems the world has turned against me! I am alone and, it seems, friendless!

CHARLEY *enters from R.*

CHAR. I say, Mr. Hawley, have you seen anything of Suzette? I have been all over the house, but can't find her.

WAL. (*aside*). Just the very one I want! (*Aloud.*) Never mind Suzette, for the present, Charley. I want to speak to you on a very serious matter.

CHAR. (*crossing to WALTER who stands C.*). Very well, sir, I am all attention.

WAL. (*slowly and impressively*). Charley Marshall, do you know anything about fighting a duel?

CHAR. What?

WAL. You heard my question. I spoke plainly enough. Now answer me truthfully.

CHAR. (*aside*). I wonder what has struck him now? (*Aloud.*) Why do you ask such a strange question?

WAL. (*tragically*). Because I am going to fight a duel, and I want you to act as my second!

CHAR. You are going to fight a duel, and want me to act as your second?

WAL. Exactly!

CHAR. (*aside*). Something is wrong somewhere. (*Aloud.*) And with whom are you going to fight?

WAL. With the man who has wrecked my home, Charley. You are now gazing at a desperate man! (*Aside.*) I wonder do I look like a desperate man?

CHAR. (*aside*). I think I had better humor the old fellow, until such a time as I can have him locked up. He's as crazy as a loon! (*Aloud.*) Very well, sir, if you are determined to fight, then I will act as your best man in the affair.

WAL. Glad to hear you say so, my boy! Now then, what weapon would you advise me to select?

CHAR. (*aside*). Anchors, if I have anything to do with the fight. (*Aloud.*) With what weapons are you familiar?

WAL. Charley, to tell you the honest truth, I never had a gun or a revolver in my hand.

CHAR. (*aside*). Well, I'm blessed! (*Aloud.*) Then how about swords, Mr. Hawley?

WAL. Don't know anything about them either.

CHAR. The chances are mighty big; your opponent don't know anything about them either.

WAL. You mean the man on whom I am going to avenge my honor.

CHAR. (*nodding*). The same.

WAL. And you would advise me to fight him with swords?

CHAR. Certainly.

WAL. But he may wound me?

CHAR. What do you care? Remember you are fighting for your honor. And in the discharge of his duty a brave man has nothing to fear.

WAL. (*aside*). I wonder am I a brave man? (*Aloud.*) But where are you going to procure the swords, Charley? I haven't a weapon of any kind in the house. And without swords we cannot fight a duel!

CHAR. Remember, Mr. Hawley, I am your second, and will attend to that matter! I am going now for the swords.

[*Exit c.*

WAL. And now to go to my room and make my will! Perhaps I may fall in the encounter. I may be no exception to the rule. Honestly I don't know whether I am a brave man or an infernal jackass! [Exit R.]

SUZETTE *enters from L.*

SUZ. (*wringing her hands*). Oh, if I could only find Charley. I am sure he would be able to do something for my uncle. I am afraid he will do something desperate in the end. The idea of talking about avenging his honor. Oh, the man must be mad! I am sure of it! No sane person ever spoke like that. And then there's the lunatic next door. He is perfectly harmless, but we must humor him! If he takes a notion to hug and kiss you, you must submit like an angel, as he is harmless. That certainly would be very nice for me, if Charley should come into the room and find the lunatic hugging and kissing me. I can see all kinds of trouble in the air already. So far I have kept out of his way. And I hope I may succeed in doing so until such time as they will lock him up. (*Sits on sofa.*)

LIONELL *enters from C.*

LION. Ah, fair maiden, why sit thou here in such a pensive attitude?

SUZ. (*aside ; in alarm*). The lunatic himself! Oh, Charley, uncle, where are you?

LION. Why is the fair maiden sad?

(*Walks down to where she is sitting.*)

SUZ. (*aside*). Uncle says we are to humor him. (*Aloud.*) I am only thinking, sir.

LION. (*looking down at her*). Ah, yes, fair maiden! (*He sits down beside her.*) I, too, was once in the habit of thinking. But, alas! it's a bad business and I think no more. When I thought too much they said I was crazy. But you don't believe I am crazy, do you, little one?

SUZ. (*quickly*). Oh, of course you're not crazy! (*Aside.*) Oh, if I could only escape from the room!

LION. I told them so myself but they would not believe me. I spoke to them of my airship and they laughed! The cause of my ruin was a policeman with a black eye. But we shall meet again, we shall meet again! But you, peerless creature, shall fare different than the rest of them!

SUZ. (*aside*). I wonder, had I better scream for help?
(*Aloud.*) And what have you in store for me, sir?

LION. You, my peerless creature, shall be my wife.

SUZ. Your wife, sir?

LION. Ay, my wife! I will carry you to my castle in the mountain fastness, in my airship! There we will bask in each other's smile the livelong day. We shall listen to the birds in the trees singing sweetly all the day. Is not the picture a very charming one, my angel?

CHARLEY *enters from C., stops suddenly and remains watching them in surprise.*

SUZ. The picture is, indeed, a beautiful one.

CHAR. (*at door C.*). I wonder who that fellow is?

LION. And now my angel, one kiss from those ruby lips and then I will away to prepare my airship for the trip to my castle in the mountain fastness.

SUZ. (*aside*). Heavens, he is going to kiss me! If I refuse he may grow violent! (*Aloud.*) And will you return soon, sir?

LION. As soon as I have given orders to my servants at the castle to prepare for your coming. I shall return soon.

CHAR. (*at door C.*). I wonder, what is he going to do now?

LION. But time passes! One kiss and fond embrace and I must be on my way. (*He embraces and kisses her; she submits in a frightened way; CHARLEY watches them for a moment in surprise, shakes his fist in anger and then disappears from door C.*) And now, my angel, I must away and prepare my airship for the journey. [*Rises and exit C.*]

SUZ. (*uttering a sigh of relief*). Thank heaven he is gone. Now to escape before he can come back. [*Rises and exit L.*]

CHARLEY *enters from C.*

CHAR. She has fled! (*Looks around.*) The fair, false and fickle maiden! To see her in the arms of another man! To see him place a kiss on her ruby lips! Oh, I am almost mad! But I'll fix him! In place of one duel being fought there will be two. Where is the elder? I must find the elder!

WALTER *enters from R.*

WAL. (*in surprise*). Are you back already, Charley?
(*Aside.*) What in the devil ails him now?

CHAR. (*laughing wildly*). Back? Oh, yes, I am back! Back just in time to see my darling in the arms of another man! To see him kiss her!

WAL. You mean Suzette?

CHAR. Certainly I do.

WAL. And you mean to say you found a man hugging and kissing her?

CHAR. Saw them in this very room and with my own eyes.

WAL. (*aside*). Suffering tombstones! it must be that Ferguson again! (*Aloud*.) And what are you going to do, Charley?

CHAR. You ask me what I am going to do?

WAL. Yes.

CHAR. I am going to have his blood! I am going to kill him!

WAL. Good! We will make a common cause of it and fight him together. Did you procure the swords?

CHAR. Yes. I left them in the kitchen.

WAL. Then we will go and examine them at once. While we are in the kitchen you can write out a challenge and I will get Johanna to hand it to him.

CHAR. The very thing! But do you know what his name is? I never heard it.

WAL. His name is Ferguson, and he's from Troy, New York.

CHAR. All right, Mr. Ferguson, of Troy, when we get through with you, your name will be mud!

WAL. Yes and very slushy mud. He little suspects the avengers that are on his track. Let him tremble and beware! We swear to show him but little mercy!

CHAR. We swear! [*Exeunt c., arm-in-arm.*]

TOM enters from L.

TOM. I wonder where in the name of heaven can my brother-in-law be keeping himself? (*Sits on sofa.*) I have hunted all over the house and can't find any trace of him! And that joke I told him about the policeman with the black eye being in front of the house seems to be no joke at all. If that officer ain't watching this house then I am a liar! It may be a pretty bad business for all of us in the end. How in thunder did he know where Hawley lived and that I was in the

house at the present time? I'll have to be on my guard, or the two of us will be occupying cells in the station before night.

WALTER *enters from C.*

WAL. (*seeing TOM*). Ha! ha! you scoundrel! So we meet face to face at last, do we?

TOM (*aside; jumping up*). I wonder is he mad? (*Aloud.*) So it seems. And do you know I have been looking all over the house for you?

WAL. No doubt you were. But you will find all the same I am on to your little game!

TOM. Game? What game are you speaking of?

WAL. You know mighty well what I am speaking about! But I tell you, sir, it won't work! You will have to answer to me for your villainy, you scoundrel!

TOM. What in the name of heaven are you talking about? Are you going crazy?

WAL. And don't you think I have suffered enough at your hands to drive any man crazy? But I tell you, sir, my eyes are open and I see you in your true colors!

TOM. I'll have to speak to your wife about the way you are acting.

WAL. Oh, yes, make out I am crazy and then have me locked up! Once I am out of your way and then you will have my wife all to yourself! Very pretty scheme to get me out of the way, I must say! But you will find I am a match both for you and my wife in the end!

TOM. What has your wife got to do with it?

WAL. You ask that question of me? Perhaps you don't know I came into this room some time ago and found my wife in your arms!

TOM. Well, what right have you to kick over a little thing like that?

WAL. What right? Oh, no right at all! I'm a regular slob, I suppose.

TOM. Oh, I see it all now! (*Laughs.*) By george! it's the best thing I've heard yet.

WAL. First he acknowledges and then laughs over it! I suppose, sir, you are proud of the conquest you have made?

TOM (*angrily*). Why, you old fool, don't you know who I am?

WAL. (*aside*). Now he is calling me names. (*Aloud.*) Yes,

I know who you are all right ! You are an infernal scoundrel ! I would order you from the house, but you might escape my vengeance !

TOM. Why, old man, don't you know I am your wife's ——

WAL. (*quickly interrupting him*). I know enough, sir. I don't want to hear any excuse from you. Inside of an hour, sir, you must be prepared to meet me in a deadly combat !

TOM (*quickly*). Oh, I say, listen to reason. This business has gone far enough ! I can satisfy you as regards your wife in a minute if you will only give me a chance.

WAL. Nothing will satisfy me but your heart's blood ! You will hear from me in a short time. I am going now to prepare for the encounter. [*Exit C.*]

TOM (*looking after him*). Well, I must say my brother-in-law is all right. He has got an idea I am trying to steal his wife. If the fool would only listen to reason he would act less like a fool and more like a human being. I wonder what kind of revenge he is going to take on me ? I must keep this quiet and see how far he will go before he sees what an ass he is making of himself !

ELLEN *enters from L.*

ELLEN. Oh, Tom, have you seen my husband ?

TOM. Oh, yes, he's been here.

ELLEN. And what do you think of him ? Do you think he is right in his mind ?

TOM. No, Ellen, I am sorry to say your husband is not all right ! He is a raving maniac !

ELLEN. Oh, Tom, as a doctor you can do something for him. Won't you for my sake, Tom ?

TOM (*aside*). I'll do him before I am through with him ! (*Aloud.*) Don't be afraid, Ellen. His lunacy at the present time has only assumed a mild form. I'll cure him before it reaches a dangerous stage.

ELLEN. Do you think it will be safe to allow him to roam about the house at will ? Wouldn't it be safer to have him locked up at once ?

TOM (*aside*). If the old fellow ever heard her talking like this he certainly would have a spasm. (*Aloud.*) There is no danger, I assure you. He is perfectly harmless at the present time. Only leave him to me.

ELLEN. Very well, Tom, I'll do just as you say. Whatever you do, don't hurt him ! [*Exit R.*]

TOM. Oh, I wouldn't hurt him for the world. When I get through with him, he'll remember me as long as he lives. Oh, I won't do a thing to him!

JOHANNA *enters from c.*

JOH. (*holding a letter in her hand and nodding to TOM as she enters the room*). Gude-mornin', sur!

TOM (*aside*). I wonder what wind blew this angel in? (*Aloud.*) Good-morning to you, ma'am. (*Nodding.*) Do you wish to speak to me, madam?

JOH. Miss, ef ye plaze, sur.

TOM (*laughing*). Well then, miss, if it suits you better.

JOH. Thank ye, sur.

TOM (*aside*). What the devil kind of a house am I in, anyway? (*Aloud.*) You haven't answered my question yet. Do you wish to speak to me?

JOH. (*in surprise*). Shure ain't I talkin' to ye fur the last five minutes or more?

TOM (*quickly*). Yes, yes, very true. But you don't seem to understand me. Do you wish to see me on any business in particular?

JOH. Faith, ye are talkin' horse sinse now, me jewel!

TOM. Well, I am glad you understand me at last. (*Aside.*) I'm up against an awful mob in this house.

JOH. In the first place thin, is yer name Misther Ferguson?

TOM. Yes. Why do you ask?

JOH. Bekase I have a letter fer ye.

TOM. Then hand it over at once.

JOH. Yis, sur.

(*She hands him letter and walks toward door c.*)

TOM (*quickly*). Oh, by the way. There is something I wish to ask you.

JOH. (*turning around*). Yis, sur.

TOM. You remember when you let me in at the front door some time ago. Did you notice any one in particular on the other side of the street watching this house?

JOH. No wan, sur, but the policeman.

TOM (*aside*). Now we are getting at it. (*Aloud.*) And do you know who the policeman was?

JOH. (*bashfully*). Shure, he's Moike Murphy, me shteady!

TOM. Your what?

JOH. Me shteady, sur.

TOM. Oh, I see! You mean your sweetheart.

JOH. Av coorse I do!

TOM. And what right has he to be loafing in front of the house while on duty?

JOH. Faith, this is the bate he do have to thravel, sur.

TOM. Oh, that's it, is it? However, don't forget to invite me to the wedding.

JOH. Faith, sur, ye make me blush, so ye do, sur.

[*Exit c.*

TOM. So the mystery of the policeman being in front of the house is explained in a satisfactory manner. No doubt he is waiting to get a chance to dodge into the kitchen unobserved and fill up at the expense of my sister's larder. So much for the servant girls and the police. (*Looks at letter.*) Now to see what is in the letter. (*Opens envelope and takes out sheet of paper; reads aloud.*) "To Mr. Ferguson: The miscreant who has come between me and my wife, I challenge to meet me in mortal combat. The place, the room in which this letter will be handed to you." (*Looks around.*) That means this room, I suppose. (*Continues reading.*) "The hour, four o'clock this afternoon. The weapons to be swords! Signed, Walter Hawley, elder of the Reformed Church." (*Crushing letter and throwing it on the floor.*) Well, I must say I am surprised! The idea of the old fellow wanting to fight a duel. And with swords, too! I'll bet he never had a sword in his hand in all his life! Still there is more spunk in him than I gave him credit for. I think I had better hunt him up and tell him who I really am, before he does something desperate!

[*Exit L.*

JOHANNA *enters from c.*

JOH. (*looking around*). Faith, the room is empty at last. Shure, I wonder is Moike still in the strate. It would be a good time for him to come in now. No wan is likely to interrupt us for some time. Oh, Michael, me darlin', where are ye?

(*MIKE looks in from R.*)

MIKE. Right here, accushla! (*In a whisper.*) Is the coast clear, an' can I come in?

JOH. Av coorse ye can!

MIKE (*entering room*). Thank heaven for that! (*Stretch-*

ing his arms.) Shure I am tired to death from standin' in the strate so long. (*Sits at table.*)

JOH. Is it tired ye are, Moike?

MIKE. Yis, an' thirsty, too.

JOH. Faith, I'll fix ye up in no time, me boy. I'll be with ye in a minute. (*Runs out C.*)

MIKE (*yawns*). I fale tired enough to slape for a month.

JOHANNA *reënters from C. with a bottle, two glasses and a cigar on a tray which she places on the table.*

JOH. There ye are, Michael; act the part av a gintleman!

MIKE. Faith, an' I will that! (*He fills both glasses, and each takes one.*) Here's lukin' at ye, me darlin'.

JOH. Drink away! (*Both empty glasses.*)

MIKE (*smacking his lips*). That's the stuff that will warm the heart av any man.

JOH. But tell me, Michael, where did ye git the lovely black eye, ye have?

MIKE. Oh, a frind av mine presinted it to me last night with the heel av his shoe!

JOH. An' do ye know who the frind is, Michael?

MIKE. I only wish I did! (*He lights cigar and begins to smoke.*) Ye see, last night some shports attmpted to pull off a chicken fight in a place called Hogan's barn. The captain got a quiet tip, an' he sint some av us down there. The sight av us caused a stampede among the shports. I made a grab fer wan fellow that loked like a minister. He wint headlong through a small window. I missed him, but his foot didn't miss me.

JOH. An' would ye know him agin if ye saw him, Moike?

MIKE (*feeling his eye*). Would I? Well I guess yes. Whin I lay me hands on him he will remember me an' me black eye, I'll bet ye. (*Puffing cigar.*)

JOH. Poor Michael! Shure it will wear away in time!

MIKE. Thru fer ye, me darlin'. But thin think av the injury to me faalin's, as a policeman.

JOH. I know it must be awful, Michael! But thin fill up yer glass agin.

MIKE. I will that! (*He fills both glasses.*) Here's that I

may be able to lay me hand on the man that gave me the kick in the eye.

JOH. I'll drink that down with all me heart.

(Both empty their glasses and place them on the table again.)

MIKE. Johanna, darlin', do ye know ef I had money enough I'd lave the foorce an' sittle down for the rist av me life an' enjoy meself like a rale gintleman.

JOH. Shure, Michael, it's yerself that talks like the rale gintleman ye are.

MIKE. An' why wouldn't I? Shure all av me frinds are gintlemin! An' wan av thim, Johanna, do be an Irish alderman!

JOH. Well, well, would ye listen to that now? A rale alderman, Michael?

MIKE. Yis, Johanna, a rale alderman. *(Listens; and then quickly, as he jumps up.)* What the devil noise is that?

JOH. *(in alarm)*. Oh, Lord, Michael, the master is comin'.

MIKE. Faith, if that's the case, thin I think I had better be on the move. *(Looking around.)* But where in the name av heaven can I hide?

JOH. *(looking around and then pointing to screen, R. C.)*. Git behind the screen, an' remain as quiet as ye can. An', Michael, darlin', for the love av heaven don't fall aslake!

MIKE. I'll thry me best not to, Johanna.

(Hides behind screen, R. C.)

JOH. I must git out meself while I have a chance. *(Runs out C., and immediately runs in again.)* I have forgotten the bottle an' glasses. *(A cough is heard from outside of door R.)* I'll have to lave thim where they are. *(Runs out C.)*

WALTER *enters from R.*

WAL. Once more I am in this room! The room in which we are to fight the duel! *(Walking up and down the room.)* The room in which I am to meet the scoundrel who has come between me and my wife. I wonder has he received the letter? Will he play the part of a coward and refuse to meet me? If he does, he had better look out for the vengeance of a desperate man! *(Thoughtfully.)* And yet am I a desperate man? It seems since I wrote the letter I am not quite as blood-thirsty as I thought I was. He may be able to handle a sword

and kill me. In that case, he would have my wife all to himself! Heavens! I never thought of that before! But my honor! Ah, yes, nothing can wash away the stain on my honor but his blood! (*Looks around, and then in surprise, as he crosses to table.*) A wine bottle and glasses on the table. My wife is just as bad as he is! Now she is giving him my wine to drink! I suppose he will be wearing my clothes next! Oh, woman, woman, when I get through with him your turn will come next! (*Snuffs the air.*) By george! not satisfied with giving him my wine, she is allowing him to smoke my best cigars! I can smell the smoke of my favorite brand in this room. Oh, some one is going to suffer for all this. I think my courage needs a little bracing, because I am dealing with desperate people. (*He fills glass, drinks it down, and then smacks his lips.*) Ah, that's the stuff! Now I feel like a desperate man again!

JOHANNA *enters from c.*

JOH. (*looking around*). Misthur Hawley, there do be a woman at the dure as wants to see ye. (*Aside.*) I wonder is Mike aslake?

WAL. A woman, Johanna? (*Aside.*) Some effort on the part of the conspirators to get me in a compromising position. (*Aloud.*) Who is the woman, Johanna? What does she look like?

JOH. She do be a mighty foine lukin' woman, sur. I axed her fer her name, an' she tould me to tell that she was an ould frind av yours, an' that ye would be tickled to death whin ye saw her!

WAL. Tickled to death, eh?

JOH. That's what she said, sur.

WAL. (*aside*). Very appropriate, I must say. To tell a man on the verge of the grave he is going to be tickled to death! (*Aloud.*) Johanna, you may show the woman in!

JOH. Yis, sur. (*She walks toward door c.*)

WAL. (*quickly*). Oh, one moment, Johanna!

JOH. (*stopping*). Yis, sur!

WAL. You gave that letter to Mr. Ferguson, as I told you?

JOH. Yis, sur.

WAL. And what did he say?

JOH. Well, he samed a bit surprised, sur.

WAL. Did he read the letter while you were in the room?

JOH. No, sur. He merely axed me if I knew the police-

man with the black eye that has been in front av the house all day.

WAL. What? Has there been a policeman in front of the house all the morning?

JOH. Yis, sur. An' now what about the lady at the dure, sur?

WAL. You may show her in.

JOH. Yis, sur. [Exit c.]

WAL. And so it seems I am between two fires. The policeman I kicked in the eye last night, waiting in front of the house for me. And now this woman sent here no doubt by this scoundrel, to get me in a compromising position! But I'll be prepared for them. I'll let them see I am a desperate man!

BELINDA enters from c.

BEL. Mr. Hawley, I suppose? *(She is heavily veiled.)*

WAL. Yes, madam, I am Mr. Hawley!

TOM enters from c. and stands watching them.

BEL. *(removing her veil)*. Walter, don't you know me?

WAL. Suffering cats! Belinda!

(She falls in his arms, while he kisses her. TOM is about to rush down on them, when MIKE utters a loud snore, and he falls against the screen, and both fall to the ground; he rises quickly and rubs his eyes at sight of WALTER. TOM disappears from door c. just as LIONELL enters; he sees MIKE and both clinch. WALTER is trying to escape through R., but BELINDA has an arm around his neck and is pulling him back. ELLEN now appears at door L., and watches them. JOHANNA is standing at door c. with a broom in her hand. MIKE and LIONELL are struggling on the floor.)

QUICK CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE.—*Same as Act I.*

ELLEN *enters from C.*

ELLEN (*looking around*). I wonder what can have become of my husband? Oh, the monster! To have deceived me as he did! To see him clasping another woman in his arms. And the idea of her coming to this very house, too! Oh, I understand it all now! His playing off insane was a very clever scheme to get rid of me and cover over his tracks. But he shall suffer for all this. He shall answer to my brother Tom for all this. Oh, the monster! I'll let him see what a wronged woman can do! Oh, but he shall suffer!

SUZETTE *enters from R.*

SUZ. Why, auntie, what is the matter? You seem to be awfully excited!

ELLEN. Excited! Well I should say I am! And I have good cause to be.

SUZ. What has happened, then?

ELLEN. Suzette, has it ever occurred to you that your uncle is one of the greatest rascals unhung?

SUZ. Why, auntie, how you talk. (*Aside.*) I believe every one in the house is going crazy.

ELLEN. I am speaking nothing but the truth. Haven't I always been a loving and devoted wife to him? And yet less than ten minutes ago, I saw him holding a woman in his arms and in this very room!

SUZ. Oh, auntie!

ELLEN. And at this very minute she is under this roof!

SUZ. Oh, auntie, there must be a mistake somewhere.

ELLEN (*shaking her head quickly*). There is no mistake, Suzette. I saw them with my own eyes and in this very room!

SUZ. But, auntie, he may be able to explain all.

ELLEN (*sternly*). Oh, yes, he will get a chance to explain all to my brother before I am through with him.

SUZ. Your brother, auntie?

ELLEN. Yes, child, my brother.

SUZ. And is he in the city at the present time, auntie?

ELLEN. He is not only in the city, but also in this house. I will let my husband see I am not alone and friendless as he may suppose.

SUZ. (*aside*). Poor auntie is as bad as the rest of them. (*Aloud.*) Auntie, what is the name of your brother?

ELLEN (*proudly*). Ferguson, child! Doctor Thomas Ferguson!

SUZ. Why, auntie, you don't mean to say the Doctor Ferguson that lives a few doors from here is your brother?

ELLEN. I do indeed, child.

SUZ. Well, I must say I am surprised!

ELLEN. And now, child, I am going to find him and tell him how my husband has behaved toward me. Tom shall attend to him! [*Exit L.*]

SUZ. (*looking after her*). Mercy on me! I do believe every one in the house is going crazy. First uncle acts like an insane man, and now auntie seems to have a touch of the same complaint! I wish I understood what it all means. If this keeps up much longer I will be as bad as any of them. Oh, I do wish Charley would come, and see if he could unravel the mystery for me.

CHARLEY *enters from C.*

CHAR. (*sternly*). And so, false-hearted woman, we meet face to face again, do we? (*Aside.*) How innocent she looks.

SUZ. Why, Charley, what do you mean?

CHAR. I mean that I know all!

SUZ. (*angrily*). Charley Marshall, I do believe you are as crazy as the rest of them.

CHAR. Crazy? I should think I ought to be crazy after what I witnessed in this room a short time ago!

SUZ. (*quietly*). And what did you witness, Charley?

CHAR. (*angrily*). Dare you stand there and ask that question of me? Dare you, I say, after the way in which you have betrayed my confidence?

SUZ. Well, Charley Marshall, will you be so kind as to tell of what I am guilty?

CHAR. Oh, yes, I will tell you. And when I am through you and I will know each other no more.

SUZ. Well, sir, I am waiting patiently.

CHAR. (*sternly*). Listen then! Less than an hour ago I came suddenly into this room. (*Shaking his head.*) But you did not see me! You seemed busily engaged in what was going on. And what do you think I saw when I looked into this room?

SUZ. (*shaking her head*). I am sure I don't know. (*Anxiously.*) For goodness' sake, Charley, what did you see?

CHAR. (*sternly*). I saw Suzette Hawley in the arms of another man.

SUZ. (*quietly*). My uncle, I suppose.

CHAR. (*savagely*). No, false-hearted woman, not your uncle! If it had been your uncle I would not have cared!

SUZ. Then who was it?

CHAR. (*aside*). Oh, the perfidy of this girl! (*Aloud.*) Just as if you didn't know who he was.

SUZ. Honestly, Charley, I don't know what you are talking about. Describe this man to me, please.

CHAR. He was a wild individual, with long hair and a face the color of chalk.

SUZ. (*uttering a sigh of relief*). Oh, I understand it all now. (*Laughs.*) Why, Charley Marshall, don't you know who that man is?

CHAR. (*aside*). Now she acknowledges it, and even laughs over it as if it were some joke. (*Aloud.*) No, I don't know who he was. I suppose you will kindly inform me, won't you? You seemed wrapped up in each other's company pretty much.

SUZ. Don't get sarcastic please, but just listen.

CHAR. Fire away, then.

SUZ. Next door is a man that is crazy, yet perfectly harmless. He was an old friend of my uncle's long before his mind became clouded. He was in the habit of visiting my uncle several times during the day and this custom he has kept up to the present time. He is in the habit of making love to every woman that enters this house. He is perfectly harmless, only we must humor him to prevent trouble! When you saw him he had just entered the room, and the moment he saw me his love making fit came over him. If I had resisted him, the Lord only knows what might have happened. And now, Charley Marshall, you see what kind of a man your rival—as you suppose him to be—really is.

CHAR. (*laughing*). And so it seems I was jealous of a crazy man all through.

SUZ. So it seems. Are you not ashamed of yourself, sir?

CHAR. Suzette, I am a regular blockhead ! If I had listened to the promptings of a jealous heart, we would have been separated forever. But, Suzette, will you ever forgive me ?

SUZ. Yes, Charley, I will, on one condition.

CHAR. And that is ?

SUZ. That you will never doubt me again.

CHAR. Not while I live ! I came too near losing you this time, to ever run the risk again !

SUZ. It's a lesson, Charley Marshall, you should never forget.

CHAR. And I never will !

[*Exeunt L.*

TOM enters from C.

TOM. I wonder where the old sinner is ? I'll break his head when I lay my hands on him ! No, I won't, either ! I'll accept his challenge and fight him a duel. He knows no more about handling a sword than I do, so that I am perfectly safe. The idea of him hugging and kissing my wife as if he had known her all his life. With me it was entirely different ! I had a right to hug and kiss his wife ! She is my sister ! But my wife is a total stranger to him ! And come to think of it, what the deuce brought her to this house ? Did she come here on purpose to see him ? It must be so. Oh, I'll fix him for this.

WALTER enters from L.

WAL. (*sternly*). And so, you scoundrel, you received my challenge, and as yet have given me no definite answer.

TOM (*shaking his fist at him*). Then here is my answer now, you old monkey. I accept your challenge and will meet you at four o'clock.

WAL. (*aside*). He ain't even satisfied with robbing me of my wife, but he must add insult to injury by calling me names. (*Aloud.*) And are the weapons satisfactory to you ?

TOM. Why, you old gorilla, I am willing to fight you with anything from toothpicks to Gatling guns. And remember, we fight until one or the other of us shall fall ! There will be no quarter asked or given in this fight, old biscuit face ! Nothing will satisfy me but your heart's blood !

WAL. (*aside*). I must make a strong bluff here ! (*Aloud ; tragically.*) You are right, sir, it shall be a fight to death ! And when you are lying weltering in your own blood, and

then, and not until then, will I know that my honor is avenged !

TOM (*aside*). I wonder have I carried this thing too far ? (*Aloud.*) It will not be my blood that will be spilled, I assure you !

WAL. Perhaps not. But at four o'clock the tale will be told. And then may the best man win, and as I consider myself the best man, I am going to win.

TOM. After me !

WAL. Pardon me, before you.

TOM. Perhaps ; but the hour of four will tell. And now we part not to meet again until the hour of four, when we are to settle our little dispute. Remember, sir, the hour of four.

[*Exit c.*

WAL. What had I better do ? Run away or fight ? If I run away they will say I am a coward ! If I remain I may get killed. This fellow talks like a regular savage ! I am beginning to be afraid of him already. I'll remain ! I'll fight ! I had almost forgotten I was a desperate man ! And desperate men never run away ! Then there's that infernal policeman I kicked in the eye last night ! How the deuce did he get into this house ? I'm in a nice mess, I must say ! By george, an idea has just struck me ! The swords we are going to fight with are in the kitchen. I'll go down and dull the blade of one so that it wouldn't cut butter. The other one I'll put an edge on like a razor and use myself. I'll show him what a desperate man can do !

[*Exit c.*

MIKE *enters from R.*

MIKE (*both of his eyes are blacked*). At last I have found the man who gave me the kick in the eye last night. (*Sits at table.*) He is beneath this roof, an' I'll make a prisoner av him before I'll lave the house. Shure, the boord av directors will make a sergeant av me fur this cliver pace av wurk. It will be a mighty big feather in me cap ! But what the divil is he doin' in this house ? I'll bet he is tryin' to rob the place. I must see Johanna an' tell her to be on her guard.

JOHANNA *enters from c.*

JOH. Arrah, Michael, where have ye been ? Shure I have been all over the house lukin' fer ye.

MIKE (*looking around and then speaking in a cautious whisper*). Johanna, I have gude news for ye !

TOM *enters from C., looks at the two for a moment, and then hides behind the screen, R. C.*

JOH. Ye have?

MIKE (*nodding*). Yis.

JOH. An' what is it, Michael? Are ye goin' to be made a sergeant?

MIKE. Not now, Johanna. But I may in time.

JOH. Thin what is the gude news, Michael?

MIKE. I have found the man that gave me the kick in the eye last night in Hogan's barn.

JOH. Ye have, Michael?

MIKE. Yis, Johanna, I have.

JOH. An' where is he now?

MIKE. Undher this very roof.

JOH. Michael Murphy, are ye goin' crazy? The idea av that man bein' undher this roof!

MIKE. Ye rimember me tellin' ye the man that guv me the kick loked like a minister or daykin?

JOH. Yis.

MIKE. Well, that very man is undher this roof now. Shure, Johanna, ye had better go to yer master an' till him to lock up the silverware before he stales it.

JOH. Whisper, Michael.

MIKE. Well, Johanna.

JOH. Ye say the man who guv ye the kick in the eye loked like a churchman?

MIKE. Yis.

JOH. An' that you saw him in this house?

MIKE. Yis, agin.

JOH. Well, Michael Murphy, allow me to tell ye the man ye have riference to is me boss, an' the owner of this house an' a couple more.

MIKE. Well, fer heaven's sake! An' thin he is no burglar, Johanna?

JOH. He is not! An' now that ye know who he is, what are ye goin' to do?

MIKE. Do me duty like an honest man!

JOH. Thin ye mane to arrist me boss, do ye?

MIKE (*feeling his eye*). It's against the law to patronize a chicken fight, in a barn, at midnight! As an officer av the law I must do me duty, an' arrist him!

JOH. Think av his wife, Michael.

MIKE. Yis, an' think av me black eye, Johanna.

JOH. An' ye won't listen to rason thin? Ye won't listen to no argument from me? Ye are bound to disgrace him all through by makin' a prisoner av him. Carryin' him through the strates in a patrol wagon, like any common criminal. Michael, I am ashamed av ye! 'Pon me wurd ye are a disgrace to the Irish race!

MIKE. Faith, Johanna, I must do me duty!

JOH. Thin, Michael Murphy, ye an' I are from this time forward complate strangers. Niver spake to me agin. I am ashamed to say ye were iver me frind! [*Exit C.*]

MIKE (*looking after her*). 'Pon me soul, our cat has a long tail. But thin I must do me duty, girl or no girl. Wance I have this man a prisoner, an' I am shure av bein' a sergeant be the ind av the month! Now to arrist me man. (*Rises.*)

TOM (*stepping from behind screen*). Officer, just a moment, please!

MIKE (*in surprise*). Well, sur.

TOM. I wish to have a few minutes' conversation with you.

MIKE. But I am in a hurry now.

TOM. Then you will have to let your hurry wait!

MIKE. Do you know, sur, ye are a-talkin' to an' afficer av the law?

TOM (*sternly*). I don't care who you are. Now listen to me! And be sure and pay particular attention to what I am saying.

MIKE (*aside*). I wonder is this fellow wan av the boord? (*Aloud.*) Well, sur, I am all attention.

TOM. I have been listening to the conversation between yourself and the Irishwoman. Now answer the question I am going to ask you, and do it truthfully. Did the captain send you up here purposely to arrest the elder, Mr. Hawley?

MIKE. No, sur, he did not.

TOM. Then why are you here?

MIKE. The captain sint me up here to kape an eye on a crazy man that lives nixt dure.

TOM (*sternly*). And what are you doing in this house? You claim the lunatic lives next door. Then why are you here?

MIKE (*humbly*). Shure, Johanna is me sweetheart.

TOM. Indeed. And is Johanna in the habit of treating you to her master's best wine, and allowing you to smoke his good cigars?

MIKE. Arrah, how do you know that?

TOM. I generally have my eyes open. (*Aside.*) Now to work a strong bluff on this fellow. (*Aloud.*) Then it seems you are determined to make a prisoner of my friend!

MIKE. I must do me duty.

TOM (*angrily*). Duty be hanged! Listen to me! Your captain is a dear old friend of mine. The members of the police board are all old friends of mine. You can go ahead and arrest my friend. The judge is a friend of mine and will discharge him. That, Mr. Murphy, will be the end of the case as far as my friend is concerned. But not so with you. I will prefer charges against you. You know what they are. And in place of becoming a sergeant you will be dismissed from the force. Do you like the picture, Mr. Murphy?

MIKE. An' ef I don't arrist yer frind, ye won't prefer no charges agin me, will ye?

TOM (*aside*). I have this fellow on the run all right! (*Aloud.*) Well, I really don't know, I am sure!

MIKE (*aside*). I hope he'll change his mind, or I'm a goner. (*Aloud.*) Shure, sur, there has been no harm done as yet.

TOM. Well, seeing you look at it in that light, I will also be charitable with you. If you promise not to molest my friend, I will keep my mouth closed.

MIKE (*gratefully*). Oh, thank ye, sur!

TOM. And now, Mike, you don't seem to be such a bad fellow after all. Go down to the kitchen and make up with your sweetheart, Johanna.

MIKE. Thank ye, sur, I will.

TOM. And Mike, if you are a real good fellow, I will speak to the captain about you.

MIKE. Thank ye, sur. I wish ye would. An' now, sur, I am goin' to find Johanna, an' tell her the news. [*Exit C.*]

TOM (*looking after him; then laughing*). Nothing like making a strong bluff once in a while. I would have had a spasm if he had asked me what the captain's name was. In fact I don't even know whether they have a police board in this city or not. I am not long enough here yet to find out. At all events, I got the old man out of a bad scrape, and my sister will never know anything about last night's escapade. [*Exit R.*]

BELINDA *enters from L.*

BEL. I wonder what kind of a house have I got into? It

seems every one beneath this roof is more or less crazy. Oh, I do wish I could see my brother ! Perhaps he might be able to explain some of this mystery to me.

ELLEN *enters from L.*

ELLEN. Well, madam, now that the mischief has been done, what do you propose to do ? (*Both stand C. and look at each other scornfully.*)

BEL. What do you mean, madam ? You speak in riddles. Will you kindly explain to me ?

ELLEN (*sneering*). All very clever indeed ! But let me tell you, madam, you will find your match in me. I will show you I am not a child, that you can trifle with with impunity. (*Sternly.*) I will show you that I am able to meet cunning with cunning !

BEL. (*aside*). This woman seems to be as bad as the rest of them. (*Aloud.*) Madam, do you wish to insult me ?

ELLEN (*sneering*). I insult you ? I am afraid you know not the meaning of the word !

BEL. Oh, you shall answer dearly for all this.

ELLEN (*laughing*). I suppose you will have me ordered from the house ! All very nicely planned, I must say ! (*Angrily.*) But it won't work. You may have alienated his affections from me, but thank heaven there is a place where all such wrongs are righted ! I mean the courts of justice !

BEL. Madam, you shall answer to my brother for all this. He will deal with you accordingly. I will not remain another minute in this room to be insulted by you !

ELLEN. I suppose your brother is some big, burly ruffian, equally as bad as yourself !

BEL. Oh, this is monstrous.

ELLEN. Perhaps before you will go you will kindly inform me who your brother is ?

BEL. (*sternly*). Madam, my brother is the lord and master of this house.

ELLEN. Your brother is the lord and master of this house, you say ? You don't mean to say that Walter Hawley is your brother ?

BEL. Yes, he is my brother. And he shall hear of my treatment while beneath this roof.

ELLEN. Then you don't know who I am ?

BEL. (*shaking her head*). No, nor I don't care.

ELLEN. Oh, but you do though ! Why I am your brother's wife !

BEL. Indeed ! Well I must say you have a remarkable pleasant way of welcoming one of the family. Will you kindly explain the meaning of this reception ?

ELLEN. With all my heart ! And when I am through I am sure you will forgive me.

BEL. Perhaps I may. Proceed please.

ELLEN. A short time ago when I entered this room I found you clasped in the arms of my husband.

BEL. Also my brother please.

ELLEN. Very true. Still at that time I did not know he had a sister as he had never mentioned your name.

BEL. Perhaps he thought I was dead !

ELLEN. Very likely. At all events I grew jealous. I thought you were some one that had come here to usurp my place. I grew indignant !

BEL. Naturally.

ELLEN. So I determined to wreak my vengeance on you first and then appeal to my brother afterward.

BEL. (*laughing*). So it seems you have a brother also ?

ELLEN. Certainly, madam. My brother formerly lived in Troy, New York. I met him this morning for the first time in a number of years, and he surprised me by telling me he lived only a short distance from here.

BEL. And what is the name of your brother ?

ELLEN. Doctor Tom Ferguson !

BEL. Do you mean to say he is your brother ?

ELLEN. Of course I do. But you seem surprised.

BEL. (*laughing*). Well, rather.

ELLEN. And why, pray ?

BEL. Because the gentleman you just named as your own brother is my husband.

ELLEN. Your husband ! My brother your husband !

BEL. If Tom Ferguson, formerly of Troy, is your brother he is also my husband.

ELLEN. Then it seems we are sisters after all ? (*Both hug and kiss one another affectionately.*)

BEL. So it seems. Though we came mighty near being deadly enemies.

ELLEN. Still you must admit your appearance in this house seemed a little bit suspicious at first.

BEL. Granted !

ELLEN. And now that the mystery has been solved, I am sure you will forgive me for my unjust suspicion of you.

BEL. (*kissing her affectionately*). I forgive you from the bottom of my heart!

ELLEN. Thank you, dear.

BEL. For after all are we not sisters?

ELLEN. So we are, dear. [*Exeunt L.*]

LIONELL *enters from C.*

LION. I have seen him! At last I have met the man who caused all my trouble! The man with the brass buttons and the black eye! And yet something seems to be wrong. (*Feeling his head.*) This man has two black eyes. I shall have to visit my castle in the mountain fastness and there consult the stars. They will reveal all this mystery to me.

TOM *enters from R.*

TOM (*aside*). I wonder who this fellow is? (*Aloud.*) Ahem!

LION. (*looking around quickly*). Ah, a stranger within the gates! Tell me, stranger, is my airship without?

TOM (*aside*). This fellow is as crazy as a loon! (*Aloud.*) Oh, yes. I saw it when I came in. Are you not afraid of some one stealing it?

LION. The only one that would dare rob me of it, is the man with the brass buttons and the black eye!

TOM (*aside*). By george! he means Murphy, all right. (*Aloud.*) And why are you afraid of him?

LION. Because that man drove me from my home. Made me the outcast that I am! They say I am crazy! But you don't believe I am crazy, do you?

TOM. Oh, no, you are not crazy. (*Aside.*) I am afraid this fellow will make it kind of warm for Murphy, before he can be made a prisoner of.

LION. Of course I am not insane! And I will show the world I am not. And after I have had my revenge on the man with the brass buttons and the black eye, I will board my airship and hie me away to my castle in the mountain fastness!

TOM (*aside*). I can see Murphy's finish once this fellow starts in! (*Aloud.*) But are you quite sure this is the same man you mean? Might there not be a mistake somewhere?

LION. The only thing that I can't understand is that this man with the brass buttons has two black eyes.

TOM (*aside*). A chance for the Irishman yet! (*Aloud*.) And how are you going to be sure he is the right man?

LION. I am going to my castle in the mountains, and consult the stars.

TOM. And when do you start?

LION. Immediately. And now, stranger, farewell until next we meet! [*Exit c.*]

TOM (*looking after him*). By jupiter! there is no joke in this piece of business. This lunatic has some fancied hatred for a man with brass buttons and a black eye! And poor Murphy seems to fill the bill completely. This crazy fellow is liable to do some harm, if he is not checked in time. It's no use to see the place turned into a morgue! I'll have to help Murphy this time, although it goes against the grain to help the police on general principles. Lucky thing for me I have the very stuff in my pocket that will produce the result desired. If I could only run across Murphy in time I could fix the matter up with him. I wonder in what part of the house can I find him?

MIKE *enters from c.*

MIKE. I beg yer pardon, sir, fur disturbin' ye. But have ye seen anythin' av a long haired chap in this room lately?

TOM. Yes, he was here! Why are you looking for him?

MIKE. The captain just sint word to me to bring him to the station.

TOM. Well, you are going to have a mighty hard time of it. That man was talking to me and he swears he will have your life or know the reason why!

MIKE. Shure I niver harmed the man in all me life!

TOM. Granted! But then we can never explain the whims of crazy people! He seems to be fascinated by your brass buttons and your beautiful black eyes!

MIKE. Shure he ought to be! He is responsible for wan av thim, an' yer frind for the other.

TOM. Oh, let that pass!

MIKE. Faith, an' I will, or I'll git it in the neck. But what do ye advise me to do?

TOM. Listen!

MIKE. Well, sur.

TOM. I have here a certain powder. (*He takes small pa-*

per from his pocket.) Get Johanna to furnish you with a glass of wine. Drop the powder into the glass. Then get Johanna to give it to the crazy man. If he drinks it, it will render him harmless, and you can get him to the station before he recovers. Do you understand me?

MIKE. Yis, sur.

TOM. Then here is the powder. (*Hands him paper.*)

MIKE (*taking same*). Thank ye, sur.

TOM. Oh, by the way, Mike, I had almost forgotten! Have you made up with Johanna yet?

MIKE. Oh, yis, sur, thanks to you everythin' is all right in that direction.

TOM. I am glad of that. And don't forget about the directions I gave you as to the use of the powder.

MIKE. I won't, sur.

[*Exit c.*]

TOM (*looking at his watch*). I wonder what time it is getting to be? It must be close to four o'clock. The hour when I am to fight the duel with my brother-in-law. The more I think of it, the bigger fool I feel I am making of myself. One sure thing neither one of us will be able to do much harm to the other. It seems to me it's more of a joke than anything else. And yet what right had he to be hugging and kissing my wife? (*Looks at watch.*) Four o'clock now! If he intends to keep the appointment, he should be here now!

WALTER *enters from L., followed by CHARLEY who carries two swords.*

WAL. So, you scoundrel, you are here, are you?

TOM. Yes. And when I get through with you, your wife will be a widow!

WAL. Talk is cheap, talk is cheap!

TOM. And blood is still cheaper, as you will find, sir!

CHAR. Come, come, gentlemen, enough of this! Select your weapons! (*He holds the swords out to them and each takes one.*) Time!

WAL. (*to TOM*). Understand, sir, there is no kicking in this fight!

TOM. Certainly not! You don't think we are going to indulge in a game of football, I hope!

CHAR. (*sternly*). Gentlemen, we are wasting valuable time! Are you ready to commence?

TOM. I am ready! (*Aside.*) I'll have to laugh in a minute!

WAL. And so am I! (*Aside.*) I wonder can I reach his kidney!

CHAR. Then commence!

(*They face each other, and then commence to fight in an absurd fashion. CHARLEY is watching them with a grin on his face.*)

SUZETTE enters from C., looks at them for a moment in astonishment, and then rushes down and grabs CHARLEY by the arm.

SUZ. (*angrily*). Charley Marshall, what is the meaning of this scene?

(*At sound of her voice, the fighters look at her and then separate.*)

TOM (*aside*). Now to crush the old fellow completely. (*Aloud.*) And so you old scoundrel, you have prompted this young woman to rush in when she did, and thus put a stop to the encounter!

WAL. Liar!

(*Both of them try to get together again when SUZETTE steps in between them.*)

SUZ. (*sternly*). Stop! (*Calls.*) Auntie, this way, quick!

ELLEN and BELINDA enter from L.

ELLEN. In the name of mercy, what is the matter?

(*She crosses to WALTER'S side, and BELINDA crosses to TOM.*)

SUZ. It seems, auntie, uncle and this gentleman were trying to cut each other to pieces, when I interrupted them!

WAL. (*to BELINDA; sternly*). Belinda, come away from that scoundrel!

BEL. I shall do nothing of the kind! This gentleman, Walter, is my husband!

TOM (*throwing the sword away and stepping up to WALTER*). I understand it all now. The mystery is explained at last! You are married to my sister, and I am married to yours! We have been at cross purposes all along! Shake! (*Both shake hands.*)

WAL. (*quickly ; aside*). But how about the policeman ?

TOM (*aside to him*). That's all right, old fellow, I have fixed all that up.

(*A loud noise is heard from outside of door C., and LIONELL and MIKE enter arm-in-arm and intoxicated. LIONELL has on MIKE'S hat and coat, while MIKE is in his shirt sleeves.*)

LION. (*waving his hand*). It's all right, people, I am going to leave you now and wend my way to my castle in the mountain fastness !

MIKE. An' I'm to be a sailor on the airship !

(*Both stagger out door C. again, still arm-in-arm.*)

ELLEN. A good riddance of bad rubbish !

BEL. And so say I !

WAL. And now that everything has been explained satisfactorily, let us go in to supper taking along with us our friend, Mr. Ferguson, of Troy !

ALL. And so say we all !

(SUZETTE and CHARLEY up C. TOM and BELINDA down L. WALTER and ELLEN down R.)

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ACT II. — Down on the farm. Tranquillity Hedges. A distinguished wayfarer. "Git." A miscue. A carom on the Professor. "The bugler alarm." The last day at home. Rehearsing. The fortune teller. A shower of hay. A true friend. Frank's father. The wedding gown. Josiah's best clothes. "Where's my collar-button?" The minister. A momentous interview. "I must object to this marriage." Father and son. "My honor is at stake." A plucky bride. "Whom God hath joined, let no man put asunder."

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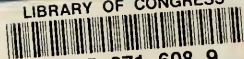
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